

Briefing on Macmillan's Access to Treatment campaign



Purpose: To provide an update on Macmillan's position on the Cancer Drugs Fund and value-based pricing

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Introduction

Since 2009 Macmillan Cancer Support has been calling on the Government to improve access to effective cancer drugs for people with rare and less common cancers.

In December 2011, we released our report [Improving Access?](#) setting out Macmillan's perspective on the implementation of the Cancer Drugs Fund and the development of a value-based pricing system. This briefing summarises our current Access to Treatment campaigning priorities arising from this research.

Macmillan wants people living with rarer cancers to be able to access the cancer drugs they and their doctors believe they need, no matter where they are living in the country

Barriers to access

Historically, the UK uses significantly fewer new cancer drugs than other European countries and is slower to provide access through the NHS to 'gold standard' treatments. The reasons for the disparities are threefold:

1. The current drug pricing system (the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme) can result in unjustifiably high prices for cancer medicines;
2. NICE appraisal processes are inflexible and unresponsive, especially where medicines for rarer cancers are concerned; and
3. There has been a great deal of strain on the cancer drugs budget over the last twenty years as incidence increases.

The Cancer Drugs Fund

We were pleased when the Government announced in July 2010 that it would be creating a Cancer Drugs Fund, which amounts to £650 million of extra money over three years to help patients get hold of those medicines they and their clinicians believe will be effective in treating or controlling their cancer.

Although we warmly welcome the Fund and we are delighted it has so far provided access to vital medicines for nearly 12,000 patients, in *Improving Access?* Macmillan highlights key areas where its operation could be improved:

- **Regional variation** – We want the Department of Health to monitor Cancer Drugs Fund expenditure much more closely and explore any significant regional disparity in the numbers of applications made to the Fund or in approval rates
- **Awareness of the Fund** - Macmillan wants all cancer patients to be offered personalised and supported information about their treatment options, including those drugs that can only be applied for via the Cancer Drugs Fund
- **Clinical audits** – We want the Department of Health to ensure all SHAs are undertaking and regularly publishing robust clinical audits to make sure that the effectiveness of drugs to treat rarer cancers is being monitored.

Value-based pricing

By the beginning of 2014, when the Cancer Drugs Fund is due to come to an end, the Government wants all medicines to be priced according to the ‘value’ they bring to patients and the NHS – value-based pricing.

The Government has not yet set out the detail of how value-based pricing will work in practice, but held an initial consultation between December 2010 and March 2011. In *Improving Access?* Macmillan called for further consultation on the new system to help guarantee that it meets the needs of cancer patients.

Macmillan is now in discussion with a number of key policy makers, charities, industry representatives and academics to help further understand the Government’s thinking on value-based pricing. Whatever the new system looks like, Macmillan believes that it is crucial that it improves access to drugs for people with rarer cancers. More specifically, we are calling for:

- **Continued improvements in access to medicines** – A Government commitment to making all drugs that are accessible through the Cancer Drugs Fund available on the NHS at the beginning of 2014
- **Rarer cancers** – Government to ensure that drugs to treat and control rarer cancers are evaluated fairly in the new system of value-based pricing
- **Meaningfully involvement** – The Department of Health to make sure cancer patients are involved meaningfully in the development of a definition of ‘value’ and in how the new system operates.

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